

OP-EDS

THE RAW-DEALED ACTOR/TEACHER SHOW

SEPTEMBER 5, 2023 | JOEL SCHLOSBERG | 0 COMMENTS



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The Wall Street Journal now realizes that income inequality can be a source of social problems.

No, its famously pro-proprietor commentators haven't signed up for union cards. Two different editorials in the August 28 opinion pages come not to praise labor organizing but to bury it, whether it's South American schoolteachers whose policies "put unions above children" according to Mary Anastasia O'Grady in "[Socialism Sinks Venezuela's Schools](#)," or Sacramento screenwriters hitting up California for what an unsigned editorial dubs "[Jobless Benefits for Susan Sarandon](#)."

What stands out is the unlikelihood of suddenly developing a tender concern for workers in fields without Sarandon-style stars to draw attention to their cause during the most contentious film industry strike in decades (followed closely by O'Grady decrying the use of schoolchildren as "a good prop for

communists” while capitalists are equally happy to use a captive audience to prop up their own profits). Sarandon and actors struggling from a lack of comparable name recognition have more clout joining together. Meanwhile, loyal audiences perennially show up for Sarandon vehicles like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* or *Thelma & Louise* precisely because they get more than a movie ticket’s face value out of them.

More insidious is the *Journal*’s implication that pro-strike partisans are only “now seeking to put their thumb on the bargaining scale” after the “level playing field for unions and management” put in place by the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947. In fact, as Murray Rothbard has observed, “it was the Taft-Hartley Act” itself that was responsible for “taming as well as privileging” unions and leading them “into the cozy junior partnership with Big Business and Big Government that we know so well today.”

The *Journal* views subsidies for strikers as inadvertently providing “even more incentive to use artificial intelligence to replace workers” than the course of technological progress resisted by flesh-and-blood thespians. Yet it was cybernetician Stafford Beer, in the aftermath of his efforts to build a participatory computerized economy for leftist leader Salvador Allende in Chile, who foresaw moving past “the cultural myths that all technology is dehumanizing.”

Beer asked why “we shall prefer to sit a hundred pupils uncomfortably in front of a human teacher who hopes he understands relativity ... than to give the individual pupil access to videotape recordings which he can replay to his hearts content, of Albert Einstein – who could be as lucid as the day.”

Half a century after Beer noted that “a computer can be interrogated, explored, used, continuously and in different ways by a few hundred pupils at once,” devices orders of magnitude more powerful are still being misused to “condition the pupil to give the right (in quotes) answers to a set of trivial questions.” O’Grady dictates that Southern-hemisphere socialists “track students” and “administer standardized tests.” Yet as Beer hoped, “the machine could be used as a real *liberator*” at a truly free, and thus fair, bargaining table.

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PUBLICATION/CITATION HISTORY

1. “[OPINION: The raw-dealed actor/teacher show](#)” by Joel Schlosberg, *The Richmond Observer* [Rockingham, North Carolina] September 5, 2023
2. “[The Raw-Dealed Actor/Teacher Show](#)” by Joel Schlosberg, CounterPunch, September 7, 2023
3. “[The Raw-Dealed Actor/Teacher Show](#)” by Joel Schlosberg, *The Newton Kansan*, September 8, 2023